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'Waiting just a moment, as much as to say, "Don't hurry me,"
Pussy went over like a greyhound.'—Page 24.

A LITTLE HISTORY

'If ye continue in My word, the hunger shall not
induce.' JOHN 8. 54.

JOHN 8. 54.

LONDON:

W. WOOLMER, 2 CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD, E.C.4,
AND 96, FERNOST ROAD, F.R.

1884



A LITTLE DISCIPLE.

By T. D.

'If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed.'—JOHN viii. 31.

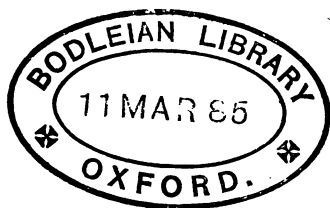
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LONDON:

T. WOOLMER, 2 CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD, E.C. ;
AND 66 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1884.

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P R E F A C E.



THE only departure from the literalness of the assertion on page 7—‘This story is quite true, every word of it’—is, that it has been thought best to change surnames and local names. With this brief explanation it is placed in the hands of the young friends for whom it is written.

T. D.

CONTENTS.



I. THE NEW BROTHER	7
II. JOHN'S DUMB FRIENDS	35
III. MERRY SCHOOL DAYS	49
IV. LOVING SPIRIT	67
V. HAPPY TIMES	88
VI. A SHORT PILGRIMAGE	110



CHAPTER .I.

THE NEW BROTHER.

THIS story is for little boys and girls. Of course, if big ones like to read it, there can be no objection; only they mustn't say, 'I don't believe it;' for it is quite true, every word of it. It is not a story about a 'wonderful pig,' or a 'performing

canary,' or a 'little dog with two tails.' Neither is it a tale of the fairies, or of giants, or of dwarfs. Perhaps if I told you about these things, you would laugh till the house rang again. Now it is a fine thing for little folks to jump and laugh and be merry. But where do you think I would like you to be to read this story? Well, I do not mind very much. All alone in the summer-house, if you please. Or on the grass under the apple-tree. Or, if you are a very tiny little trot indeed, on mother's lap, or on father's knee, or on the hassock by the side of sister, or in some nice snug little corner with a kind friend.

I am going to tell you as much as I can remember about a little boy, who grew to be a little higher than the table, and then his Father in heaven—'our Father'—called his spirit—'*the think*,' as he used to call it—from his body to go to be with Him in heaven. But more about that by and by.

He was born at Branton in the month of July 1846. Can you tell how many years that was before you were born? Try. I recollect, one fine summer's morning, a messenger brought a note to my uncle's house, where I was then visit-

ing. It was one of my father's workmen, so I knew there was news from home. When uncle opened the letter he smiled, but did not tell me what it was about. 'Well,' thought I, 'I'm not such a very big boy, and perhaps it's something that I've no business with.' Of course I popped about to help aunt, and very likely seemed as if I didn't care to know, though I did want to know very badly all the while.

In a little time Uncle William sat down and wrote a note, folded it, put it into an envelope, and addressed it. It was to another uncle, who lived a couple of miles away at a farm-house, where we were delighted at any time to go. You will not wonder at this when I tell you that we rode on Jack, the black pony, and romped to our heart's content with the fine large Newfoundland dog, Pry, and gathered mushrooms, and fed the hens, and looked about among the straw for the eggs, and set traps to catch the sparrows, which you will perhaps say was not very good. And then, after going with uncle to see the lambs race each other, and trotting with our thick boots over the newly turned-up soil by the side of the ploughman, our good aunt always had a tart or

a grand mince-pie ready for us. Now, with all these, and a multitude of other little treats, you may be sure that whether it was Midsummer or Christmas, we were always ready to go to Standleys. So you will not wonder that I was very glad indeed when Uncle William told me that I was to carry the note that he had written to Uncle Thomas. So away I ran, as light as a lark, over the green meadows, across the brook, and along the edge of the corn-fields, till I got first to the tall poplars and then to the noble elms which surrounded uncle's home.

I looked at the letter, wondering whether it contained the news from home, and comforted myself with the thought that perhaps Uncle Thomas would tell me. I was not disappointed either. For when he had opened the note, and aunt had been to the pantry, and brought a piece of currant pudding, such as nobody but she could make — at least I thought so — uncle said, 'Do you know that you have a new little brother?'

I said, 'No, uncle, indeed I do not; but have I?'

The news seemed too good to be true. And when uncle told me that I really had, I was glad, and no mistake, as all little folks are when they

get a new little brother or sister, except those who are afraid that their 'nose will be put out of joint,' as nurse says.

I need not tell you how anxious I was to see him. Little else was thought of or talked about but this baby brother. In a few days I went home, and there he was, sure enough. I think I see his tiny fingers now, and his little blinking blue eyes. I should not wonder if you can guess what I did first. Did you whisper, 'You kissed him'? Well, yes, of course that was it, and a very queer brother I should have been if that had been forgotten. But very softly, you know, for little baby brothers and sisters are as tender as—well, as tender as babies.

Then we watched him day after day, throwing out his arms and legs and crowing with all his might. For some time he was a fat, chubby boy, but by and by he grew thin, and cried often. It would, I think, have made you cry if you had heard his pitiful tones sometimes. His mother, I am sorry to say, was very ill too, and not able to attend to her little boy. And so his sister became his chief nurse; and you may imagine how hard she tried, by all the little attentions

she could think of, to take the place of her sick mother.

And Aunt Phoebe too—good, kind aunt that she was—who had a little baby girl of her own just a little older than our baby, sometimes came in, and, taking the frail little fellow in her arms, would let him share with his little cousin the first sweet food which God provides for us. So that John could say afterwards :

‘ “ Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hushed me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheeks sweet kisses pressed ?
My mother ” and my auntie.’

I must not forget to tell you that when he was a few weeks old he was baptized. You have, in God’s house, often seen the minister take a little boy or girl upon his arm and sprinkle its face with water, as very impressively he said, first mentioning the name, ‘I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ And you have sometimes thought, ‘I wonder why babies are taken to the house of God to have water sprinkled upon their faces.’ Perhaps some one has told you that the minister

then gives the name—Elizabeth, or James, or Charles, or Ernest, or whatever father and mother say they wish it to be. That is quite correct; but there are other reasons, which I am sure you will be glad to remember the next time you see a baby baptized. I want you to take your New Testament, and read aloud the nineteenth and twentieth verses of the twenty-eighth chapter of St. Matthew, and also St. Mark, chapter sixteen, verse sixteen. There you read that Jesus Christ Himself commanded His apostles, that is, those who were His ministers, to baptize all who received their teaching in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And in some other verses, which I will tell you, so that you may turn to them—Acts ii. 41; viii. 12, 36–38—you will read that the first ministers of Christ did as He told them. Those who believed in Christ were baptized with their children. Now, when this was done, it was the same as if they had said aloud, for everybody to hear, ‘We love Christ, and we mean to do as He says, and teach our children to do so too. We know that as our bodies cannot be made clean and kept clean without washing them with water, so our souls cannot be made good and kept good, except

through Jesus Christ, who will take away our sins, and so make our hearts as if they were washed.' This is what your dear father and mother meant when you were baptized ; and this is also what our little boy's parents wished when one of Christ's ministers baptized him.

It was not so very easy to fix on a name. There were plenty of names to be found, it is true ; but who could decide on the best ? There had been three little boys before. The first of them had to be the same name as one grandfather, and the next the same as the other. Then the little boy number three kept alive the name of an uncle and a great-grandfather. So mother said, 'Little boy number four shall have the same name as his father.' How could a better name be possibly found than JOHN ? Lots of good men have had that name, she said ; two of the best of all in the New Testament. Then there was another man who lived about a hundred years ago, and who did a lot of good in the world. Mother thought she would like her little boy, by and by, to try and imitate him, even if he could not be nearly as great a man as he was. That was John Wesley, of whom we have all heard so much ; and I do not think we shall ever learn too much

about him. And so this new brother was baptized 'JOHN WESLEY,' and that settled it.

A few days after, something else happened which must have a place in this baby's history. The doctor came—such a kind, smiling, loving man—and took a very small lancet out of a case which he carried in his pocket. Then, gently holding the little arm, he made a tiny mark in the skin, and, taking some fluid from a dwarf of a bottle, dipped the point of the lancet into it and touched the place in the arm. Perhaps you will say, 'I know what this was; he was vaccinated.' Yes; and the little arm soon became very sore, but only for a short time. It was soon well again. This was done to prevent him from being very ill of a bad disease called small-pox, which often causes people to die.

It was not so very long after the arm had got quite well, that father was seized with a very dangerous illness, and the doctor and everybody held down their heads sadly, for they said he would be sure to die. One morning a closed carriage came to the door, and took away father and mother to the railway station. They went to the sea-side; and every morning, when the postman came with

letters from Brighton, we were so much afraid that there would be a black-bordered envelope with the news that our dear father had gone home to heaven and left us fatherless. But the good God did not permit this; and though father was away ill for a long, long time, he at last was able to come back, and after a while got quite well.

But you will want to know what became of baby John. He and his sister, who was then about fourteen years of age, went to live 'up town,' as we always called that part of the village where Uncle George and Aunt Martha lived. With a loving sister, and a kind uncle and aunt, and plenty of new milk, and all kinds of nourishing food, his little legs got bigger and bigger, and his arms too. And his face, his sister said when she was writing to her father and mother, was 'beginning to look quite pinky;' for she remembered how pale the little narrow face was when they left home.

Those little fists full of fingers were almost always in his mouth; and he now and again cried as if his gums were in pain. And I dare say they were. Anything that was cool he would take in his hands and seize between his gums with all his might. It was generally a white ivory ring, tied

to a piece of ribbon put round his neck, which the little gums gripped with such pleasure. But sometimes, as a very great treat, the coral and silver bells, which father and grandfather had both used when they were babies, a long, long time before, were brought out of the drawer where they had been so carefully locked up. How cool and comforting the coral was to the little gums! And the silver bells' tinkle, tinkle, tinkle—how like their jingle was to the tinkle of the bells on the sheep which we had so often heard in the sunny fields at Standleys, or to that of which we had read on the reindeer's neck, or the ting-a-ting-ting of diligence horses!

One morning, after father had got quite well again, baby John was lying stretching himself on his mother's lap. She was very gently rubbing the tender gums, when a little white point of ivory popped through—it was the head of the first tiny tooth. And soon after another and another, until in a few weeks there were two rows of sharp little ivories which could bite crust and biscuits or almost anything else that such a tiny stomach ought to have in it.

On the whole, John was not very much given to

crying. He generally found something better to do. But now and again, when the bath happened to be colder than usual, there was a small storm. It began with a splash and a hiccup, and ended with a squall. But the sun shone through the rain, and it was soon over.

But while these things had been going on, John had begun to try to go on himself. It was no very hard work to roll over, or to shuffle himself along. If he had only had some wheels under him, he would have got on famously, and who knows where he would have paddled himself to? He had now a pair of sturdy little legs, and the more he used them the sturdier they grew. It was not so long before he found that they would bear the whole weight of his body, and then, with the help of somebody's finger, he would venture on a step or two. Every day he grew bolder, and crept along from chair to chair all round the room. He tumbled about a bit, but that he did not mind, although there were sometimes big bumps on his forehead or scratches on his knees. So he toddled and waddled here and there, until one day, when sister was standing on the opposite side of the room and held out her hands, he walked all the way

across to her. What a long journey it seemed, the first time he went all alone from one side of the sitting-room to the other! How his sister Mary hugged him, and how they both jumped together for very gladness! As days went on, he felt less and less afraid, and after a very little time he could walk and run about anywhere almost. But like most little boys, he sometimes went where he had better not have gone, and so got into trouble.

They used to say that his sister Mary knew all her letters, and was a regular little chatterbox, before she was twelve months old. Now John did not get on so fast as that. There was a little round board, which had been taken great care of, for I cannot say how many years. Mary and James and Thomas and Richard had all learned their letters from it; and now John began to learn his too. His mother did not make him learn all in one day, as they say Mrs. Wesley made her little son John and her other boys and girls learn theirs. But our little man could very soon say both large and small letters; and not a little proud was he when he could go round the board four times, naming the pictures, big letters, little letters, and short words.

without a mistake ; for it is always very pleasant to have got over a difficulty.

Have you already begun to ask, 'I wonder what sort of looking little fellow this John Wesley was?' I am very sorry I cannot show you his portrait. He died just before people began to have their photographs taken. And we feel very often sorry, as we look through our albums, where there are the faces of so many of our friends, some of whom are still with us, and a great many of whom, like this little friend, are now in heaven, that we have not one of him too. But you know the faces of many of those who are gone are photographed in another place—I mean, in our memories. And often, when our eyes are quite closed, we can see them almost as clearly as if they were standing near to us. And so I fancy I can see him this minute, and I will try and tell you what he was like as far as I remember him. He was not a fair, curly-headed boy, and not particularly pretty. His hair was very straight indeed, as a small lock of it which is lying on the desk while I describe it reminds me. It is very, very soft, and as the light of the sun falls upon it, it is just that shade of brown which seems to say that if the boy had become a man his

hair would have grown much darker than it was. I have said he was not pretty; neither was he particularly plain. Pretty girls are all very well, but pretty boys do not seem quite the thing. But he was an interesting boy, for all that. If he were not a handsome boy to look at, he was handsome in other ways. I think you will say, when you know a little more about him, that he had a 'handsome' spirit and temper. He was rather tall of his age, and when perfectly well, which was by no means always the case, was as active as most boys. Perhaps he was just a little bit old-fashioned in some of his ways, not enough for you to call him an old man in little boys' clothes, but just enough to make him sometimes very droll indeed.

He was always ready for fun, and, although he had not a great many toys—for his mother did not think it a good thing to buy him very many—he knew how to get a great deal of pleasure out of the few he had. Whenever mother or sister or aunt had finished up the cotton and there was an empty reel, John was allowed to add it to his playthings. These 'bobbins' were his chief toys. He would put a lot of them on a string, and so make a long wooden chain; or, taking them one

by one according to their size, would build up very high towers, and make houses, sheepfolds, etc. These reels were very handy indeed, for they would stand either for a lot of little boys at school, or for people at chapel or church; for animals in a wild beast show, or for cows in a cowhouse; for horses ploughing in the field, or for bullocks grazing. If he cast them into his bath, to him they became fishes swimming here and there; or if he threw them into the air, they were little birds flying about. Then, all in a minute, they could be cocks and hens and turkeys and ducks, *cock-a-doodle-doo*, *gobble-gobble-gobble*, *quack-quack-quack*, in a farm-yard. And in the spring how easy it was to make the big reels into mother ewes and the little reels into lambs! And there they would be, a whole field full, as quick as thought.

But there were lots of real ducks in the village. Thousands and thousands were reared for the London market. Sometimes, when he went 'up town' with his sister to tea, they would linger by the big 'weir' pond as they passed, and watch scores of these ducklings sporting in the water. How they did enjoy themselves! Sometimes they would swim after the flies, which were darting here

and there on the surface, and gobble them up as if they hadn't had anything to eat since breakfast time. Then they would pop their heads under the water and their little legs up in the air, like little children holding up their hands at an infant school. I cannot tell what sweet morsels they found down there. And what games they had amongst themselves, dabbling and washing and swimming and diving! No wonder our little friend clapped his hands with delight, and almost wished to jump into the water to swim about with the little things, they seemed so happy. But there are not many little boys who can swim as well as little ducks.

When John and his sister Mary got to Uncle George's and Aunt Martha's, just beyond the big walnut trees, there was the black cat on the threshold to welcome them. It was the biggest, finest, sleekest, gentlest black cat you ever saw; and such a jumper, especially when uncle took him in hand. 'Now, Wowkin,' he would say, with a very funny drawl as he made the name come out of his nose, for Uncle George dearly liked a bit of fun—'Now, Wowkin, come here and show John what a good jumper you are.' And then

Wowkin came treading softly towards his master, as much as to say, 'Yes, I know what you want.' Then, first touching the points of black Wowkin's whiskers—he hadn't a white hair about him—up went uncle's big hands ever so high for a jumping pole. Pussy looked up with a 'miau! miau!' which, I suppose, meant, 'Shall I?' and then, waiting just a moment, as much as to say, 'Don't hurry me,' went over like a greyhound. He did leap well; never was there such a cat! No wonder it was easy to forgive him if he sometimes managed to get into the dairy, and have a little of the very best cream out of the corner of the milk lead. But there was no doubt he felt ashamed of himself, as he came blinking out of the dairy, licking the cream off his whiskers.

Oh, it was a delightful home, Uncle George's. I don't mean that it was a very fine house. It wasn't that, but it was a very happy place, in-doors and out. It could not have been the piano either, for that was a box of broken wires, jingle-jingling, all out of tune. But there was always plenty of music; for, if the church bells were not ringing, the birds were singing merrily. I suppose it must have been chiefly uncle and aunt's kind faces, and

kinder doings and sayings, which made us so glad to go there. But there was a whole host of little things that helped to make the place what it was to us. There was the ivy-covered summer-house, looking out on the grass plot and flower garden, over which hung the mountain ash laden with bright scarlet berries. What a delightful play-house it was! And who can forget the big Windsor pear-tree on the gable end of the house, and the sweet juicy fruit with which it was laden? The Blenheim orange tree too! who knew, but those who had tasted, how delicious were those apples? Then the filberts which overhung the wall from the clergyman's garden. There was a sort of understanding that the filberts on the overhanging branches fell to our lot. How fortunate we were!

What pleasure it was to run out into the court as soon as George came into the yard gates at the bottom of the broad gravel walk with the yoke and the pair of bright buckets, full of the afternoon's milk from the Lower Farm! Then to greet the Grenby Hill milk-cart, which either 'Little Depper,' the active brown mare, or 'Boxer,' the chestnut horse, brought twice a day up the Great

Lane. Were we not as happy as kings when Joseph let us turn the tap of the milk-cart, and the sweet new milk came gushing into the buckets? Who could resist the temptation to dip a little hand into the white foam, just to taste? Then we would go down the four steps into the cool dairy, and watch George or Joseph pour the milk into the large 'leads.' What fun it was to see it come gurgling through the great holes, like open mouths, all round the strainer! And after tea aunt would put on her big white apron, and, going down into the dairy with bowl and skimmer in hand, take off the rich yellow cream from the morning's milk all round. Then, as the bowl filled, she emptied it into the leaden cream 'kivver,' there to stay until churning day came round.

Churning day, did I say? We had to be up betimes and no mistake, if we had any share in butter-making. There was the big churn in the broad middle passage. It was not often that we were up soon enough to see the cream poured in, but very often the grinding of the churn, as it whirled round, awoke us. At first it went 'whish-whish—whish—whish.' But when the tiny par-

ticles of cream were broken, as they went flip-flop one against the other, little by little 'whish-h—whish-h' changed into 'whip-pitty—whip-pitty—whip-pitty,' and by and by into a heavy 'flump-p—flump-p—flump-p,' as the great lumps of butter fell from beater to beater inside the churn.

Even more interesting was it to watch aunt making up the butter. It had been taken out of the churn and put into a sort of big oval wooden tray with salt and water. How aunt worked it about to get the buttermilk out, like a baker kneading his bread! They say that a dairy-maid must have cool hands and a warm heart, and I'm sure aunt must have had both. How cleverly she kneaded the butter just to do all that was necessary to it and no more, dividing it and weighing it out in two-pound lumps, and a little at the end into pounds and half-pounds! How deftly she handled the butter-boards, rolling and patting the lumps into shape while one had hardly time to say 'Jack Robinson!' But the half-pounds and quarters! How quickly and nattily they turned into little round pats under aunt's hands, and then were stamped with a cow, or a wheatsheaf, or something of that sort! And when our own little hands were

allowed to do the stamping of just a pat or two, what a privilege it was! Now and again aunt would put a bit of butter into a very coarse cloth and force it through between the threads. Out it came in little strings of butter rolling one over the other like the coils of a tiny cable. I think that was the best of all; but you know it was only for very special occasions. You will not wonder that John and his brothers and sister did not want asking twice to go 'up town.'

As the months passed on, John learned many little verses of hymns and nursery songs from his sister. And when he played at Sunday school all by himself, it was very funny to hear how he managed to jumble one thing up with the other. This is the way he would sometimes do. Having set up the hassock for one scholar, a four-legged stool for another, and the sofa cushion for a third, he began singing to his scholars in this fashion :

'I like little pussy, her coat is so warm,
And if I don't hurt her, she'll do me no harm;
So I'll not pull her tail, nor drive her away,
But pussy and I together will play.
Around the throne of God in heaven,
Thousands who wander and fall
Never heard such a beautiful land as He's gone to prepare,
For of such is the kingdom of heaven.

But still to His footstool in prayer I may go
To ask for a share in His love ;
And if I thus earnestly seek Him below,
I shall see Him and praise Him above.
And many dear children are gathering there.
So I'll sit by her side and give her some food,
And pussy and I very gently will play.'

That, you see, was a very queer jumbling together of three little hymns. If he had done it just for fun, as we say, I cannot think that even in a very little boy it would have been quite the thing. But I am pretty sure that in John's mind it all fitted together very well indeed. Do you see that there is a little string of love that runs all through it, from beginning to end? I think that love to pussy and love to Jesus fit together exactly. I am quite sure of this, that whenever Jesus sees us unkind to anything, He knows quite well that we do not love Him half enough, or we should love all that He loves. That is why I think that John's queer little jumble of a hymn was as pleasing to God as if it had had all the lines and words ever so well in place. Of course, when he grew a little older, he could say these and other hymns quite correctly. And then, as God ought always to have the very best we can give Him, it

would not have done at all to have spoiled good hymns by mixing little bits of this and little bits of the other all up together, like the plums, and the sugar, and the flour, and the candied peel in a plum pudding.

John had no sooner begun to read little words than he became really hungry to read books like bigger people. Of course it was ever so long before he could do this, and he did not live long enough to learn to read very, very hard words. But he tried every day to learn a little, and so he soon learned to read really very well for such a little boy. Now nothing pleased him half so well as to listen to the beautiful Bible stories which his mother or sister would tell him, as he sat or stood by her side, while they darned stockings, or mended little trousers, or sewed on buttons. But to be able to read these same stories for himself, how delightful ! And so the Bible became his chief reading-book ; and whenever he could, he would spell out, sometimes in the Old Testament and sometimes in the New, about Samuel's little coat, or David minding the sheep, or Joseph dreaming, or the happy garden of paradise, or the wonderful Babe of Bethlehem.

But his heart was moved most, and his little eyes glistened most brightly, when it was some story about Jesus and His love, which he either read himself or had read to him or told to him. For these are, you know, the easiest of all to read and understand. His mother took a great deal of pains to help him ; and what nice times they had together !

It almost always happens that little boys who are fond of reading about Jesus try very hard to be gentle and kind as Jesus was. And mother used to tell us that was just what He wished us to be. That was what He came from heaven for, she said ; and if we not only tried to be like Him, but really and truly asked Him to help us, then we should be sure to find it every day more and more easy.

Now mother did not care very much whether her children lived in a big house or a little house. She was very well satisfied with the one she and they lived in, which was neither very big nor very little. But it was as clean and as nice and comfortable as busy hands could make it. Neither did she care that they should have very much money, although she was very thankful

when father had money enough to buy that which was necessary for us. Mother believed that God would and did hear our prayer and answer it, when we said, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

But that which she was most anxious for was this: that while our little arms grew farther and farther out of the sleeves, and the trouser legs would somehow or other get too short, all that was naughty in us should get less and less, and all that was good should get bigger and bigger.

Now, as I said just now, she knew quite well that this could not be without God's help, and she wished her little girl and boys to feel so too. And so she did what I do not doubt your mother does sometimes—she took us one by one, as it was convenient, with her to her bedroom.

It was there that she was so glad to do as Christ Himself commanded: 'Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'

We did not then quite understand how kind and thoughtful it was for mother to take us with her when she went to pray. And yet, as the

mother and the little son knelt side by side, and the mother took the boy in prayer to Jesus, it made us feel that Jesus must be very near and very ready to help, because mother spoke to Him as to her very best Friend.

It was not always so, though. I remember one day a little boy was in a very naughty temper indeed. I think he had been disobedient; any way he wasn't glad when mother said, 'Let us go up-stairs, my little boy, and tell God about it.' Although it is long, long ago, I think I can see the good mother kneeling and telling God 'all about it,' and the same little boy standing by her side pouting and peevish, refusing to kneel. Oh, how the bad temper did swell and swell in that little heart that day! And how sorry he feels to-day as he thinks of it! He does not wonder now that the little stubborn spirit had to be subdued by punishment: mother was very, very patient; but when love did not conquer, other means had to be tried. So the little boy who went to bed two hours before his proper time had plenty of opportunity for thinking how silly and naughty he had been.

I do not think that John ever acted like that

little pouter ; for I believe that he learned to love the Father in heaven so much, that he liked to pray to Him. And so it came to pass that he was one of the happiest little boys in all the county, in-doors or out, in rainy weather or sunshine.

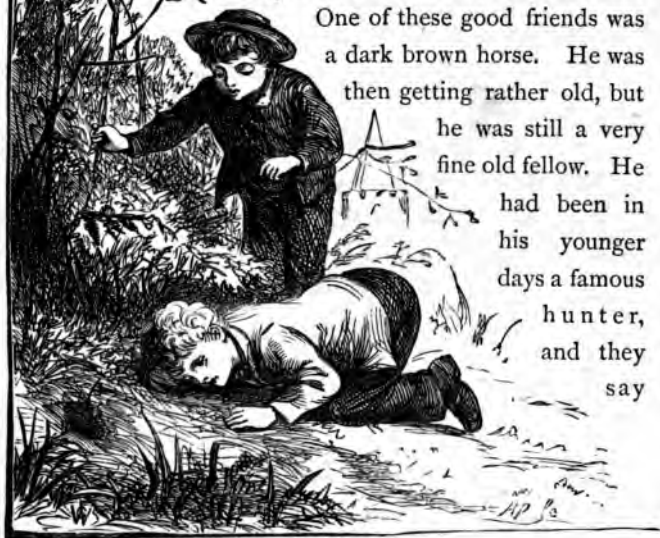
H CHAPTER. II.

JOHN'S DUMB FRIENDS.

OW fond John was of all sorts of living creatures! And they all seemed so fond of him too. That is the way it is with love. People that love stand a very good chance of being loved. No wonder that the Bible says of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'We love Him because He first loved us.'

But I was going to tell you something about John's dumb friends.

One of these good friends was a dark brown horse. He was then getting rather old, but he was still a very fine old fellow. He had been in his younger days a famous hunter, and they say



he used then to clear the hedges and brooks like a greyhound. But as father did not hunt, 'Goldspring'—for that was his name—had no chance of showing how clever he was in going across country 'as the crow flies.' But didn't he trot in the trap! Sometimes brother James, as we were going along a nice piece of level road, would just say, 'Now, old boy, show them how you can do it—*chk! chk! chk!*' and away he went like the wind. There was no horse in the whole country round that could pass him when he once put his shoulders well to the collar, as we say. It was quite delightful to ride behind him, because he was so safe.

But he was as gentle as he was swift. And with our little boy he was more like a lamb than a big horse. In the stable or out, how he liked to be fondled! John would cuddle his fore-legs, and creep in and out between them, without any fear. And Goldspring would prick up his ears, and just touch him with his nose, as much as to say, 'That's right, little boy, have as much fun as ever you like; you need not be at all afraid of me.' Neither was he, for he would stroke his nose, and pull his tail, not to hurt him, you know,

but more like the shaking of the hand of a good friend. And Goldspring seemed to understand it all, and was altogether as good a four-legged friend as a little boy need wish to have.

And John did not forget to reward the dear old fellow by an apple or a crust of bread, or both, of which the horse was very fond indeed. How he would scrump them up, and then look down knowingly, or neigh gently, which was his way of saying, 'Thank you, little boy, and I'm ready for some more as soon as you please!'

And what a treat it was when Henry brought Goldspring out of the stable, for John to be put on his back and ride from the stable to the chaise! Now Henry had been father's good faithful helper for many years, and we should almost as much have expected to wake up some morning and find father and mother gone away as to have missed Henry and Abel. They always seemed to act as if they were interested very much in all father's concerns and never could do too much. John became quite a favourite with both of them, as well as with the other workmen.

But they were not all as wise and kind as these two, I'm sorry to say. Sometimes John

went into the carpenter's shop to see Abel and old John and the rest of them making doors and windows. He would stand and watch one with his plane, 'whisht! whisht! whisht!' making the rough wood quite smooth, and see the soft white shavings fall one by one into a great heap like a snow wreath; or another with mallet and chisel busily fitting mortises and tenons. And yonder, in another part of the shop, a saw would be going 'kritcsh-sho! kritcsh-sho! kritcsh-sho!' while at a bench on the farther side there was such a tap-a-tap-tapping with hammer and nails as to be almost deafening, and John had to put his fingers into his ears.

Now he wanted very much to do a little planing and sawing and hammering for himself. But tools with sharp edges are not by any means good play-things for small boys, for more reasons than one. Little George Washington found out that many years ago; and so did his father, when that fine cherry-tree was hacked with the new hatchet. But a hammer is not so bad, if the little hands that use it do not go tapping the chairs and tables and piano, and make marks where hammer marks are not wanted. And so one of the workmen—I

think it must have been Abel—made John a splendid little wooden hammer of beech, good enough for a king's son. And then he seemed almost like a real carpenter himself. When he could get a few little round-headed nails, and a board into which he might drive them, what a clatter that little hammer made !

But I said that one or two of the men were not quite so kind. They knew that little boys are easily frightened—at least, some are. So sometimes, when John went into the shop, perhaps with a message to the workmen, or to get some little pieces of wood to play with, some one said, 'Don't go to the other end of the shop, John ; for, if you do, the white dog will catch you.' Now this was very wrong indeed, because there was no dog there at all, neither black nor white. It was only said in order to frighten a very little boy. I do not know how big men could be so cruel. But there are some very stupid people who talk to children about bogies and hobgoblins. Now I tell you this in case anybody should talk to you in the same way. Don't be frightened a bit, and tell them it isn't true, for there are no such things. John of course told his father and

mother about the 'white dog,' and they scolded the man very much who had said it ; and I hope he never did such a stupid thing again.

I think I may as well tell you now about some other of John's dumb friends. There was a little black terrier dog, who really belonged to our neighbour Mr. Rodson. But as we were very fond of Trimmer, and he was quite as fond of us, he was very often indeed at our house. He was a very good hand indeed at catching a rat, or barking at night if anybody happened to be about. And he dearly liked a game too, as well as any little boy in the village. Everybody knew Trimmer, and had a kind word and a pat for him.

Saturday afternoon was the time when we generally looked out for a visit from him ; for then we were not at school, and could have a good romp. But there were certain little duties on Saturday which we bigger boys had to do, in which John was too little to join, such as cleaning the shoes and knives and forks ready for Sunday, and getting in wood and chips and coals and shavings. For everything that could be done on Saturday ready for Sunday, father and mother always said, had to be done.

But we wanted to have a bit of fun out of our work, and there was no harm in it either. Besides, John could help us in that. It came into our heads that we would make a little cart which would carry the wood, and make Trimmer some harness, so that he could draw it from the wood-barn to the kitchen. So we set to, and first of all made a truck. The wheels were the most difficult part; but it was all managed after a while. Then the harness—well, that was not so easy. But by means of pieces of old reins and other bits of leather which we found in the harness-house, and a brad-awl and some waxed thread, and the help of a playmate or two, we really got out a very good set of play harness. And Trimmer liked the fun too; for, when we fastened him to his cart, he pulled away like a little horse. Of course it was then quite a good spree to do our work on Saturday afternoons. And so John was the driver, and rode back on the empty truck like a Roman charioteer.

One summer's day father had to go to a wood twelve miles away to see some timber. As a great treat, he took two of his boys with him. It was a splendid day, such an one as butterflies

and boys love. What a famous run we had up the long Swint Hill! And when we got to the brow of the next hill, and caught sight of the tall church spire, how we puzzled our noddles when father said :

“ If Lowton spire
Were ten times higher,
I'd pull my shoe off and hop over it.”

And it was ever so long before we found out the riddle. It seemed almost as hard as Samson's. But father helped us when he repeated the last line, and said :

“ I'd pull my *shoe* off and hop over *it*.”

Well, by and by we got to the wood, and our first business, after the horse was unharnessed and tethered, so that he could graze, was to look out for the timber which father had come to value. And so we wandered here and there to search for trees which had been cut down, but were now almost overgrown with ferns and foxgloves and huckleberries. In the course of our search, what should we come upon but a rabbit's hole! As the earth had lately been scratched out, we felt sure that there were some rabbits in. If the hole were not too deep, we could perhaps get at them.

Any way we would try. So James, who had the longest arm, lay down at full length upon the ground, and, cautiously feeling into the hole, soon put his hand upon something very soft and warm.

It wasn't a fox or a polecat, or anything of that kind, or it would have snapped his fingers pretty sharply. We were certain it was a rabbit's burrow, or we should neither of us have ventured to put a hand in. Well, he felt and felt about, and at last found two little ears, and, taking hold of these, he pulled back his hand, and out came one of the fattest and warmest grey little bunnies you ever saw. Oh, how it scrambled about to try to get back into the hole! So brother gave it into my hands, while he felt if there were any more. 'Why, Tom,' said he, 'it seems to be full of them.'

'Wait a bit,' I replied, 'while I get the basket. I'll take out our dinner, and we'll put them in there, and they'll go home as snugly as need be.'

James agreed that would do well. So the basket was soon empty, and, putting some hay at the bottom of it, in we popped little gentleman 'Number One.'

Presently out came another, and another, and

another, until there were five bonnie little pairs of bright eyes all in the basket together. How proud we were of our find! So, gathering a handful of fresh, crisp green food for them to munch at their leisure, we left them snugly in the basket for the ride home. What a surprise it would be for John and Richard! and what a hullabaloo there would be when the lid was opened!

At last we got home again, and when our five little friends were brought out one by one on to the table, there was such shouting as you never heard. But the ten bright little eyes fell on a new world. What did all this rumpus mean? They could not understand it. They panted in doubt whether they were with friends or foes.

Then we had to decide on a home for them. It would not do to shut them up in a hutch, as you do your tame rabbits; for the wild little creatures had been used to scamper about in the wood in perfect freedom. The big basket would do very well for them for one night, and meanwhile we could plan for the future.

So we talked the matter over, and next morning we were all up betimes. And John was up

too ; for not one of us was more interested in our bunny family than he.

Inside the wood-barn there was a portion which had been separated from the rest of the building by a low wall, with the floor rather lower than the other part. It was made to store sawdust in ; but, as it was no longer needed for that purpose, we thought what a capital little rabbit-house we could turn it into ! So we first of all swept it out very clean. Then we got some bricks, put them on edge in rows at a little distance apart, and others on the top in the opposite way to cover them. So we built up some very snug little places indeed. A handful of fresh sweet hay inside the brick cots made them as cosy as five tiny grey rabbits need wish to have for a home. And they could all snooze together in one little cottage, if they liked, or could divide into two families, if they thought well.

In this way we tried to make up for taking them away from their father and mother, which did not seem, after all, quite kind. Still I do not think they missed the old rabbits much for more than a day or two ; for they soon seemed very contented and happy.

John had the pleasure every day of helping his brothers to find them some nice green food. As they ate well, and scampered about well, and slept well, they grew soon so big that the little brick cots had to be enlarged.

After a while, when the rabbits were nearly full-grown, it became a question whether we should not make a home for them out of doors, and give them their liberty once again. Now we were wishful to keep them in the orchard if we could ; but if they had been turned out without any place being got ready for them, we feared they would run away altogether. So, taking our spades, we went into the orchard, and, fixing upon a spot between the lowest apple tree and a filbert tree, almost close to the new quickset hedge, we began our work.

Now, if we had had such handy little tools as the mole, or the fox, or our friends the bunnies, we could have got through the work quickly and well. But we had to do the best we could. So we dug a narrow trench three or four yards long, and another short one branching out of it, not so very deep, and about as wide as we thought would be convenient for the five little friends whom we

wished to set free, and yet did not want to lose. Then, covering the trench up with some pieces of wood, we threw the earth over, and laid the turf back into place, leaving only the ends of the trench open, so that the rabbits could run in and out.

When all was ready, we explained to them what we had done, which I dare say they did not quite understand. Then we showed them the way in at the front door, and left them to talk the matter over together in bunny language, and make up their mind whether they would take to their new quarters or no. Very likely they thought we had not done the work half so well as they could have done it themselves, and I dare say they were right.

Now we hoped that we should by and by get a lot of baby rabbits, and so every day we went down into the orchard to see how our little colony was getting on. Weeks passed by, and at last one evening, when John and the rest of us went as usual to look after them, there, sure enough, was a little tiny bunny, about as big as a rat, hop-hopping round the hole. And another, which had ventured a little farther away, was

munching some wild parsley; while a third, not so bold as the rest, lay with his head on his forepaws just at the front door of their home, looking out on the world of wonders. But I think we may now leave the little rabbits to grow into big ones, and make other inquiries about John himself.

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CHAPTER. III.

MERRY SCHOOL DAYS.



OW there are a great many little boys in the world who, if they cannot have a thing at the very moment they want it, get very impatient and cross. They whine and say, 'I will,' and 'I won't,' and a lot of other things which it would be better if they did not say. When they are learning to count or to read, if they do not just remember the word or the number, Oh, how they pout! Perhaps you have never seen any small boy or girl either like that? Well, if you haven't, so much the better. I do not say that John was never the least bit impatient, because he would have been almost like a little angel in that case, and we might perhaps have peeped under his shoulder-straps to see if some little wings had begun to grow.

But I can say this much, that he tried very hard not to be impatient, and generally succeeded. I think I can tell you why. It was not because he had a heart which itself was any better than yours. But his good mother had taught him that bad tempers can only be made into good tempers, and impatient children can only be made patient, by the help of the good God, who is always wishful to help those who are trying to be what they ought to be and to do what they ought to do. So John had learned to ask God for Jesus Christ's sake to do this every day, and that was why he succeeded. His kind father and mother tried to help him all they could. I hope that his brothers and sisters did the same; for I do not know anything more sad than when big brothers and sisters, instead of being helpful, are hinderers to little ones.

I have already told you that there was no book half so delightful to John as the Bible; and I think, if he had grown up to be a man as Timothy did, we might have said of him, as Paul said of his young friend, 'From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.' And several little stories, which I shall hope to tell

you about him, will show you that this was so.

But, of other books, the first, after he had learned his letters and had begun to put them together to make words, were three or four which had gone through many little hands then grown into big ones. You know, this was before the time of the *Children's Friend*, the *Band of Hope Review*, *Early Days*, *Little Folks*, and such delightful friends. Perhaps, if you were to see the little heap of books in brown paper covers which have John's name on them, you would say, 'Well, I think that the nice books which my friends have given me are a great deal prettier;' and you would be right.

Father and mother were not rich, and could not afford to buy many books, but those which we had were well thumbed. Some of the pictures in them were very funny indeed. The queerest were perhaps in what is called a *Pocket Bible for Little Masters and Misses*, and belonged to John's father when he was a little trot. It is a sort of Tom Thumb book, not quite so long as my middle finger. I cannot now tell you very much about it. But there was a very queer picture of the

'Tower of Babel,' which looked like the shell of a big garden snail. Another gave Balaam's ass a stiff neck, and he looked round at Balaam like the unicorn at the lion when he is 'fighting for the crown.' Many of the words were much too long for 'little masters and misses,' so that John did not care very much for that book, I think.

There was another of the same kind, almost as tiny, much older and still queerer; and I am very glad indeed that the booksellers have something very much better for you. I am afraid that some of the pictures in this second little book would almost frighten you, instead of amusing and instructing. Of all the forty-three I do not think there is one which you would say was pretty.

Well, I was saying how very plodding and persevering and patient John was. Now, when he had his playthings all out on the table or on the floor, sometimes a reel would roll under the table, or a marble would get right away under the corner of the hearthrug, or into some out-of-the-way place behind the curtain, or who can tell where. Of course everybody knows that when a thing is lost the proper course is to find it, not to leave it for somebody else to find, but to search

and search and search in every corner until it is really found. John had read and knew almost by heart the story of the woman who, when she had lost a piece of silver, took her broom, and, moving the chairs and tables and stools, swept and swept and looked until she found it. So sometimes, when John had lost anything and could not find it all in a minute, and his patience seemed ready to go, he would turn to his mother and say, 'Well, but you know, mother, I must look again, for the woman did not find her piece of silver until she had looked diligently. I must look diligently too, until I find it.' That was the very best plan; and so, by taking a little trouble at the time, it saved him a great deal of trouble afterwards.

And he was just as patient when he was learning to read. To some little people it is not by any means easy to learn the numbers of the chapters. How do you think John did it? Well, do you know, almost as soon as he knew anything at all about numbers, and could count up, say to a hundred, he was not satisfied to look at the clock in the room and yet be obliged to ask what time it was. And so he got his sister to teach him how to tell the hour all by himself. How he

would go again and again to it, until he knew quite well all the numbers from I to XII! Then he soon learnt that the minute hand went all round the clock face during the time that the shorter hour hand just moved from figure to figure. So that after a little time he knew that if the hour hand stood a little above the III, and the minute hand stood at XI, the time would be five minutes to three, and so on.

Then he was very fond of watching the tiny second hand, which went all round the little circle every minute; and he was soon quite able, when the eggs were boiling, to tell his mother or sister when the three minutes or three minutes and a half were up.

But he found out that the numbers on the clock were just like the numbers of the chapters in the Bible. And as far as the clock could teach him, he could soon manage very well indeed. But as there are more than twelve chapters in most of the books of the Bible, he had next to get some one to teach him the higher numbers. Though they puzzled him a little at first, it was not very long before he could tell even the hardest numbers in the Psalms and Isaiah. Now this

was very nice, for he could then easily find the text at chapel, and turn to any chapter or verse he wished.

But as soon as our little friend began to know a little, and to feel the pleasure of knowing, he found out that there was a very great deal to learn. He had never gone regularly to school, like other little boys he knew ; and he thought, if he could only go to school as they did, he should be able to learn very much more.

So one day, after he had been thinking about it ever so long, he said, 'Mother, do let me go to Whitehouse to school ; I shall know nothing if I don't go.' This was where John's sister and brothers had gone to school, and he wanted very much to do as they had done. He wished it the more as he would then be under the care of an aunt, his father's sister. She loved him, I think, almost as well as his mother did, and that is saying a great deal.

By and by all was arranged. No little boy ever set off to school in greater glee than did John to his aunt's that day. It was like going to a second home. There was this about it too, it was not so very far from his father and mother after

all, only about six miles. And then he would be with two of his brothers, and a cousin, of whom he was very fond. So we do not wonder that going to school was very pleasant to him. And as his lessons were more regular, and he gave more time to them, he got on faster, and began to learn ever so many things of which he had heard nothing at home.

Then learning with others was so much nicer than learning by oneself, because every one tried to see who could learn the fastest and the best. While he was at home, his mother and sister did not keep him very closely to his lessons, as he was not a very strong boy. But as he was always very wishful to learn, he taught himself in a sort of play fashion. And so his first writing was very funny writing indeed. He would copy the letters out of printed books ; and sometimes they came above the line, and sometimes below the line. Capitals would somehow get to the ends of the words, or even into the middle, instead of at the beginning, which was their proper place. Some of the letters had very funny joints in them indeed, and some which should have been put together would persist in getting apart. Some which

should have faced each other were rude enough to turn their backs. And it was no great wonder that he was puzzled to know how to divide his words when he could not get all into the line. Perhaps you would like to see one of his letters. Here is one; and I do not think it is at all bad for a little boy who had almost taught himself to write, and who was only about six years old.

‘BRANTON, *August 28, 1852.*

‘MY DEAR AUNT, please will you send Mary’s shawl and my new shoes. Mary wants to see them.

I have got some splints for you: I ought to have sent them by the boys.

From J-

OHN WESLEY D.’

There were many things at Whitehouse which helped to make John’s life very happy. What a pleasure it was, after school hours, to run up the village to Uncle Richard’s! Were there not the little white wild strawberries, and the rookery, and the tomtits which would build in the pump, and the Jenny wren’s bonny little house full of round white eggs, in the hole of the wall, over which a

fern fell for a front door? What lots of starlings, too, with their nests in the barn thatch, and in the hollow places of the old pear tree! I wonder if these busy, fussy starlings, as they chuckled and chattered in such a comical way, knew how good the pears were off that same tree, when they came red and spicy and juicy out of the oven. Oh, how one's lips smack at the very thought of them!

And who can forget 'Gilbert,' the big strawberry-coloured horse, and 'Short,' the brown mare? How obedient they were to Ned the carter! Sometimes, if they had done anything they ought not to have done, or had been disobedient, he made them do penance, as the Roman Catholics say. So, tying one leg up, he obliged them to hop all round the farmyard on three legs. 'Taffy,' the Welsh nag, too,—fat, and sleek, and gentle,—how sedately he trotted along in the gig, as if he knew that his mistress was very particular indeed not to be shaken and jolted! Everybody knew his trot, as he went up and down the village, 'tip-tap, tip-tap, tip-tap, tip-tap;' and without looking out at the window they would say, 'There goes Taffy.'

There were always plenty of nice walks too. Sometimes the way would be up the turnpike road, past the corner of old Kenning's house, as far as the stone stile, and occasionally down the hill past Hurdlestone. Or, another time, it would be along the Ovington Road, beyond Sir Thomas's, to Patchcott, where the tiny little church stands all alone in the midst of the fields, with hardly a house in sight. And what delightful strolls there were all round in the meadows here and there! Away the boys went up the Church Lane, and along the narrow path between the church and the vicarage, over one, two, three green fields, to Sunny Hill and the Great Ground at Cropow. There we were always on the lookout for the rabbits, which, especially if it happened to be evening, scuttled into their holes, bobbing their little white tails, as we came near. No wonder they call that big field the 'Great Ground,' for they say it has as many acres in it as there are days in the year. And I cannot tell you how many long-horned red Devonshire oxen grazed in it. They had nothing to do but to get fat, and that they did very well indeed.

But I think the walk that John and his little

friends liked best was along the Weir Lane by the edge of the Market Hill on to the Castle Hill. They say a strong castle once stood on this hill. It belonged to Sir Hugh de Bolebec. But many, many years have passed since the castle was thrown down, and there is not the least bit of its walls left anywhere in sight. But what a capital playground it was! John's hat needed a good tie, or it would have blown I don't know where, sometimes. Castle Hill was the place to get rosy cheeks and stout legs. How we did puff in running up the steep side, and what fun it was to roll down again heels over head! Of course we never went to Castle Hill without stopping at the spring to watch the clear, bright stream as it came gushing out of the rock under the ash tree, and kept the pool full where the cattle quenched their thirst.

The path homewards led through 'Lord's Garden,' past another stream, which was always singing sweet music as it rushed swiftly over the stones and pebbles which lay in its way to the mill, three or four hundred yards lower down the valley. Now the path took us over a low stile, up a dripping narrow passage, by the end of three white thatched

cottages ; and, turning sharply to the right, we came upon the spring of the stream which had just been passed. The water runs out of the rock into a rough stone cistern, which it overflows, and then, hidden for a while, appears again where we had watched it below the cottages.

No water could be clearer and brighter and more sparkling in the sunshine than that of 'Whittle Hole ;' and so delightful is it to drink that there is a saying in the village that 'nobody who has tasted Whittle Hole water will ever forsake the place.' And so, having dipped the hand into the cistern and drunk just as a part of Gideon's men did, we were soon up in the high road and home again.

You will remember I said that John's cousin was at school with him. It was Carrie, the same whose mamma was so kind to John when he was a baby. Carrie has now some little children of her own, but she still likes to think of the happy days she spent at school with John and their companions. This is what she says of these pleasant school days :

'John and I were about the same age ; I was a little the elder, about three months. Shall I tell you a little love story of the dear old days when he

and I were at school together? We were one afternoon sitting on the hearthrug before a bright fire in aunt's sitting-room, playing and romping together, as we delighted to do. We used sometimes to play at keeping school, or minding a shop, or going to chapel. But there was one thing which we now and then pretended to do, and I think it was one of the best games of all ; at least, I know we thought so then. There is no doubt that we really loved each other very much. I suppose most little cousins do that ; and if they don't, they ought to do. We knew that our mothers, both of them, wore a ring on the third finger of the left hand, which we were told was the same as saying that they loved our fathers better than anybody else in the world. And so John thought we should show our love in the same way. But, as we had not a real ring, he tied a piece of cotton round my finger, saying, as he did it, that Carrie should be his wife ; and that when we grew older, he would buy a gold ring and be married properly. And then, just as a seal is put to a written promise, our promise in words was sealed by a kiss. And I think we were just as true and sincere as big people are when they really get married.

‘But there is another story,’ says Cousin Carrie, ‘I would like to tell you about him. He was what I will call a praying little boy, and he had very much faith indeed. You know that the Bible says : “Without faith it is impossible to please God;” and, “He that cometh to God must believe that He is.” Now John had learned to ask God, his Father in Heaven, for that which he needed, just as he asked his own father or mother for anything. That is to say, he expected that, if it were good for him, it would be given to him.

‘Aunt Mary had one afternoon promised us that we should go and see a poor sick woman, and we were looking forward to it with very great anticipation. So we put on our things and got quite ready. But our joy did not last long. Big black clouds gathered in the sky, and it seemed almost certain that heavy rain would soon fall. Aunt saw from our faces that we were very much disappointed indeed when she told us we had better take off our out-of-door garments. John was as much disappointed as I, but he said nothing, rubbed one tear or two out of the corner of his eyes, and quietly left the room.

‘Where had he gone? If you could have peeped

into his bedroom, you would have seen him kneeling at his bedside, with his little hands folded, very earnestly praying. Presently he came down-stairs again, and entered the room with a very happy smile on his face. It wasn't at all like the little anxious, disappointed face that had left us only a very few minutes before.

“Auntie,” said he, “we can go now.”

“What do you mean, dear?” she replied; “it will be raining directly.”

Then he looked up in her face, and with a look of confidence, as if he were quite certain that he was right, said, “No, Auntie, I *know* it will not rain; for I've been asking God to keep the rain away until we have been to see the sick woman.”

And, sure enough, John's prayer was answered; for we went for our walk, and not a drop fell till we had got back again into the house. Of course God does not always see it best to give us just what we ask for, any more than our father or mother does. But of things that are really good for us He says: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive.” I am always glad to think of my little cousin's real faith, and I

believe that it is just what God wishes to see in us all.'

This faith in his heavenly Father had such a firm hold on our little friend that nothing was able to shake it. Sometimes he and his aunt and Carrie would have little prayer-meetings to themselves; and then he asked, just as he would in his morning and evening prayers, for the things that were uppermost in his mind. He was especially thoughtful about his friends, particularly those who were absent. He would pray, for instance, that God would 'take care of Uncle Richard in Yorkshire, and aunt who is all by herself,' and so on.

Although he sometimes went with his aunt to the prayer-meetings at the chapel, and seemed to understand and join in the prayers, yet he liked their own little meetings best, and so would sometimes say, 'Auntie, let us have one of our own little meetings at home; they are better than those we have at chapel.'

The Peep of Day was a very specially favourite book with him. He was never tired of hearing and of reading its beautifully told stories. How often did he repeat and enjoy the first hymn in that delightful children's book!

‘ My little body’s made by God
Of soft warm flesh and crimson blood ;
The slender bones are placed within,
And over all is laid the skin.

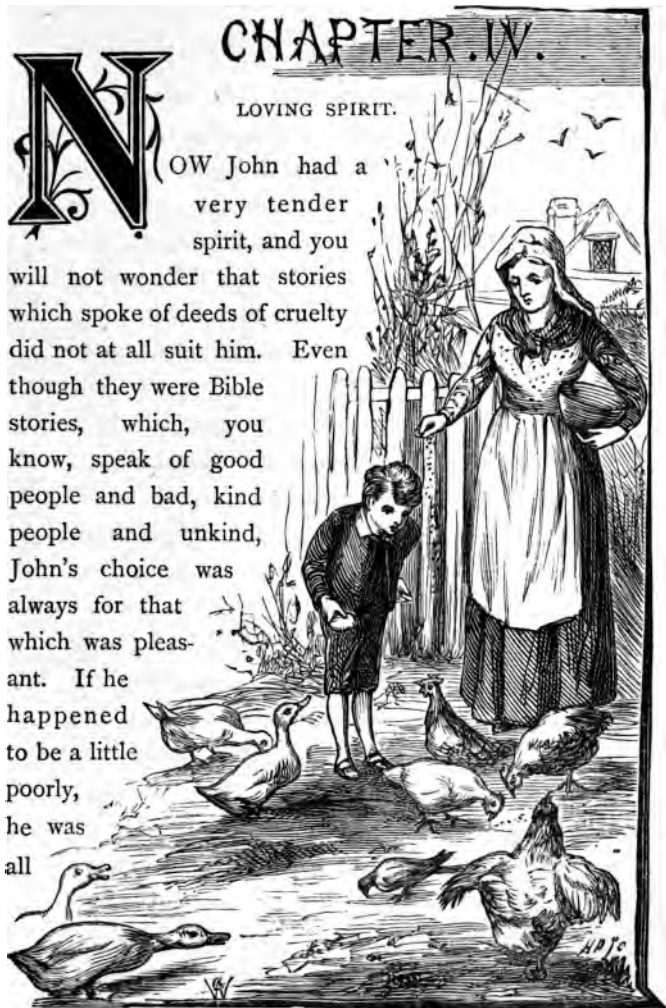
‘ My little body’s very weak :
A fall or blow my bones might break ;
The water soon might stop my breath ;
The fire might close my eyes in death.

‘ But God can keep me by His care ;
To Him I’ll say this little prayer :
“ O God ! from harm my body keep,
Both when I wake and when I sleep.”’

CHAPTER. IV.

LOVING SPIRIT.

NOW John had a very tender spirit, and you will not wonder that stories which spoke of deeds of cruelty did not at all suit him. Even though they were Bible stories, which, you know, speak of good people and bad, kind people and unkind, John's choice was always for that which was pleasant. If he happened to be a little poorly, he was all



the more disposed that way. A little school friend, named Harry, was a romping, rollicking, chubby-cheeked, kind-hearted boy, with a spirit much less tender than John's ; and he was stronger in spirit too. Now Harry was fond of pictures and stories of soldiers and battles. Nothing pleased him better than to put on his head a paper cap which looked like a helmet, and, with his pocket-handkerchief tied to a stick like a flag, and a little wooden sword hanging by his side, or a little drum in front of him, he would go marching about like a soldier ; and a pretty racket he made. John did not care very much for all this, although, at times, he could run and shout and rollick with the best of them.

One day Harry had got his Bible down ; for he was almost as fond of reading it as was his little friend. They used to take it in turns, when they read together, to choose where they should read. Harry opened his Bible at once at the books which talk about battles and all that sort of thing. 'I want to read about the kings to-day,' said he. I suppose John did not feel very well that afternoon. Anyway, he did not care just then to read about Zimri and Omri and Ahab, and all those. And perhaps

he felt a little impatient too, I shouldn't wonder. So, when Harry persisted that he would like to read in the Kings, John said, 'Harry, you only want to read about the wicked kings to tease me. I wish you would read the fourteenth chapter of St. John instead.'

Now there are a great number of people—grown-up people as well as little boys—who, if, when they feel weak and weary, you were to ask them what chapter of the Bible they would like to have read to them, would be almost sure to say, 'Oh, read the fourteenth of St. John, please.' Somehow or other, it seems to suit us all so well when we are in trouble. It is so full of kindness. It has in it some of the kindest of the many kind words of Jesus. It speaks of the happy home in the happy land. It tells of the Comforter whom Jesus sends to cheer the hearts of those who, from any cause whatever, are gloomy and sad. So you will not wonder that John said to Harry, 'Harry, please to read my favourite chapter, the fourteenth of St. John.' And very glad he was when Harry, to please his little sick friend, did as he wished.

There was a very kind-hearted woman who used to come to aunt's very often, to help her to do a

great many things about the house that needed doing. Her name was Martha. She had no little boys of her own ; but, as I have said, she had a very kind heart, especially toward little boys. And so she and John got on wonderfully well together, and John thought Martha one of his very best friends. And so she was.

John had brought with him from home a little barrow, which Walton, another of his friends, had made for him, and had painted it a bright red, for John was very fond of bright colours, and his barrow looked very smart indeed. Now this barrow had to be kept in the cellar, down I don't know how many stone steps. John was not quite man enough to take it down himself, and fetch it up again when playtime came. So that, when Martha was in the house, she it was who generally did this kind office for him. And she did it very cheerfully and willingly ; for John was very polite, and did not forget that there were a great many people in the world besides himself who need their share of attention and help.

Besides, he had read that he who would have friends 'must show himself friendly.' And it would not be easy to meet with a little boy who

had more friends than John had. And they were friends worth having, too. But kind-hearted people are sure to find out other kind-hearted people.

John and his friend Martha used to have some very cosy little chats together about the different things he had read of or seen. And Martha would tell him what she used to do and where she used to go when she was a little girl. So they were very fast friends.

I am sorry to say that news came to the house one day that Martha was very ill ; and she every day grew worse. The doctor came, but he seemed as if he could do her no good. By and by somebody said that she was dead. But that proved to be untrue, and John was very glad ; for every day nobody inquired more anxiously how Martha was than he. In a day or two it was again said, ' Poor Martha is dead.' And the church bell tolled. John said, ' I hope it isn't true.' But when it turned out to be all too true, he was very sad.

Presently he dried up his tears and said, ' I don't think we ought to cry, for Martha is where Jesus is. She has a harp now, and can sing ever so well.' And then he added, after quietly thinking

for a moment or two, 'But I shall have a trumpet, aunt, when I go where Martha is.' He had learned that to die was not a sad thing at all; for he had been taught that when good people die it is only like going to sleep, to wake up in a very happy home.

Part of the next holidays John spent with his sister at Standleys. It was a real paradise for little boys.

Almost always directly after breakfast aunt used to say, 'Now I'm going to feed the chickens; who's going with me?' And John shouted out with glee, 'Oh, I should like to go, auntie.'

Then they went into the cottage and got some barley-meal, which was put into the red pan with some water, and mixed up like a big pudding with a wooden spoon. Some corn was next put into a basket out of the bin. Off they went into the yard, and began both of them calling, 'Cub-biddie, cub-biddie, cub-biddie.' Then came the fowls running, the ducks waddling, the pigeons flying, and all tumbling one over the other, as they tried to be first in picking up the corn which was thrown down. Oh, how they hustled and scrambled! But if any of the old hens didn't get enough, because the

younger ones hustled them away—which was not polite in well-bred fowls—John threw them some by themselves. And the ducks, which could not pick up the corn with their broad bills as fast as the fowls and the pigeons could with their sharp beaks, got as their share a few spoonfuls of barley-meal.

That done, aunt would say, ‘I think you have given them enough. We will leave them to finish their breakfast, and go into the rickyard now, and feed the mother hens and their little chicks.’

As soon as the chickens saw the red pan, they knew in a minute that their breakfast was coming. If you had seen how fast those little legs moved towards those who carried it, you would have said, ‘Dear me, how hungry they are, poor little mites!’

The mother hens, because they could not get out of the coop, and wondered perhaps where their little ones were going off to in such a hurry, began to cry, ‘Cluck! cluck! cluck!’ in a very great fever. They tried very hard to get through the bars, as if they thought some one was going to run away with their babies. But when John threw a little meal under the coop, the old hen changed her call, and, taking a little bit of the

food into her beak, broke it into little pieces, and cried, in a very hurried, inviting voice, 'Chk ! chk ! chk ! chk !' Ah, now those little legs scampered just as fast back to the mother again.

When they were all getting satisfied, for there were several little families, aunt said, 'Now I think they had better have a little water.' So John ran to the trough where the horses drank, and filled the can full of fresh water, which he poured into the little red platters which stood close to each coop. Up jumped the little chicks, dipped their beaks into the water, just sipped, and then held up their little heads as if they were giving thanks for the nice fresh water as they swallowed it. Then they dipped and drank again. And so they went on until their thirsty little throats were satisfied. When all had really had a very good breakfast, aunt gave her little helper leave to set the old mother free. As he pulled back the bars, out she popped, as glad as if she had been let out of a prison. How she bustled about after her little ones ; as fussy as the old woman who lived in a shoe and had so many children she didn't know what to do !

But the best fun was to put them up again at

night, to keep them safely from the foxes and the cats. What a job it was to get the old mother into the coop, after she had been out scratching here and scratching there all day long! I dare say she could not understand why she should be shut up at all. She really seemed as if she had made up her mind that she would not go in. So they got one on this side and one on that, and, with both arms stretched out, cried, 'Sh! sh! sh! sh!' But she ran here and ran there, anywhere but where they wanted her to go. At last, after a great deal of sh—sh—sh—ing and running, in popped the old lady. The door was slipped back in a twinkling, and there she was safe and sound.

But the quickest way to get the old mother in was to put a little corn or barley-meal inside the coop, and when the chicks ran in she very soon followed them. And so each coop had its mother hen settled down in the corner snugly, and all the little ones sheltered under her big warm wings. Just three or four little heads peeped out to say, with a musical little chirrup, 'Good night,' and how very safe and warm they all were.

Don't you think that was as pretty a picture of kindly care as you could see anywhere? I do not

know one more beautiful. It must have been just such a picture as this that Jesus Himself saw, very likely, I think, at the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, at Bethany. At any rate, when He was walking one day from that happy home over Mount Olivet, and came in sight of the city of Jerusalem, His heart was so moved with love towards the children in that big but wicked city, that He said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !'

Whenever John read this verse, after he had seen the hens and chickens at Standleys, he understood very much better the great love of Jesus. He knew that He is always ready to shelter and comfort those who in spirit run to Him. Yes, far, far better, far, far more tenderly than the kindest hen had ever done to her little brood.

You know, I dare say, that there is a great deal of difference in boys and girls as to what they think about right and wrong. There are some I have known who like very well to do what is right, but also like too well some wrong things. They seem

to try to go as near doing wrong without doing it as ever they can. That cannot be a very good spirit, can it? I think not.

Our little friend, we have already found out, had learned to like doing right, because it made him happy, and because he knew it was also pleasing to God. Two very good reasons indeed, which generally go together.

There were, of course, certain things here and there over which might have been written, 'Touch not,' so far as John was concerned. The coal-scuttle, for instance, his sister Mary had told him, while at Standleys, he was to let altogether alone. I suppose she thought that he was too little to have anything to do with the fire, except to warm himself at it; and I dare say she was right.

Well, one day, uncle, without knowing that his sister Mary had forbidden him to touch the coals, said, 'Fetch me some coals, John.' Uncle was surprised to find that he did not run at once, for he was always so very promptly obedient. So he told him again. Then John, instead of going towards the coal-scuttle, which stood in the corner near the door, walked straight up to uncle, who

was sitting by the fire in his elbow-chair, and, looking him in the face steadily, said, 'I cannot, uncle; for if I do I shall break the ninth commandment.' 'What do you mean, John?' uncle said. 'Well, uncle,' said he, 'you know Mary has told me not to touch the coals; and if I do, I shall disobey her, and then I shall break the ninth commandment.' I suppose the ninth commandment had not been explained to him, and so you see he did not quite know what it meant. But he knew quite well that disobedience was wrong, and he seems to have thought that 'bearing false witness' had something to do with disobedience. It was, of course, a very funny mistake for him to make, but that didn't matter a bit. But it showed very plainly indeed that he had a very keen sense of right and wrong, and that is why I have told you this little story. I hope you will try always to know and to do what is right.

Pry, the Newfoundland dog, and John were wonderful friends. What fun they had together out in 'Mid-furlong' and Standleys Close! Pry had not been taught to do the wonderful tricks which some dogs can do. But, for running after a stick, or jumping into the water, or any amount

of romping, to say nothing of being a capital guard, Pry was your dog.

But there was another dog, of which I think we were quite as fond as Pry. He was nearly the same colour, but rather darker, all over curly tan hair. Well, when he was a pup, he was as full of mischief as an egg is full of meat; and he was often enough getting into scrapes, running off with slippers, or anything else easy to take in his mouth and convenient to tear to pieces.

One washing-day he was as usual about in the yard and in the garden. It seemed to come all at once into his head that the clothes which were hung out to dry were put there on purpose to provide amusement for him. Only, as it happened, they were most of them out of master Leo's reach, for Leo was his name. But it came to pass that a round towel hung a little nearer to the ground than the rest of the things. And so he first of all took hold of it in his mouth, and began shaking it as if it had been a rat. As it swung backwards and forwards, the fun was all the greater. After a while his paws found their way into the folded part, and he seemed to think that Betsey, who had hung the clothes out, had found him a very

capital plaything. And so he ran backwards and forwards, here and there, and jumped up and down, until, all in a minute, what do you think happened? I'm not sure that you would guess. Well, his fore-paws slipped through the towel, and so there he was slung up, something like they sling horses when they have to hoist them on board a ship. He couldn't touch the ground with either his fore legs or his hind legs. Then, as he struggled and struggled to get out, the towel began to twist round. And when we went into the yard, Master Leo made us laugh very much, for we had never seen a mischievous young pup in such a queer plight before.

At first he seemed to enjoy the fun, but when he found he really could not get out, he thought more seriously of it. Then he began to howl with all his might. Of course, the more he struggled, the more he twisted round and round. And so Leo had to learn that doggies that will be in mischief may get into scrapes much more easily than they can get out of them. Poor old boy! his tail wagged very gratefully when he found himself standing on four legs again.

But he liked fun afterwards just as well as he

did before. In fact, the bigger he grew, the more frolicsome he became. Such a dog he was for cricket! Yes, for cricket. And a capital scout he made. Well, no, not exactly capital either. I'll tell you how it was. He would stand with his ears up, and his eyes wide open, watching for the ball. The moment it went flying into the air off the bat, away he went after it. And if it happened to fall among some nettles, nothing could be better than his paws for raking it out. And then it was his turn, he thought. So away he ran with the ball in his mouth, ever so far away. He would stand quite still until one of us got almost close to him, and then he started off again, dodging us here and dodging us there, as we pursued him, leading us a pretty race.

But then that was the fun of it; at least he thought so. And he was so good-tempered, and enjoyed it all so much, that we could only hold our sides, laughing at his clever dodges, and enjoy it too. Sometimes he would have an obedient fit, and would bring the ball to the bowler the moment he picked it up and was told to do so. But in case it was 'lost ball,' then, if Leo was not already in the game, he was soon

fetched, and very quickly ferreted the ball out of its hiding-place, he had such a keen nose.

It would take up too much space to tell you any more about Leo. It would not do, however, to forget Dash, the little white-and-tan spaniel at Standleys. He was a great pet with John and uncle and all of us.

He had many droll tricks, too, but perhaps the drollest of all was his curious conduct whenever singing was going on. There were some tunes that suited his small lordship very well indeed, but there were others he could not endure. If a tune happened to be to his liking, if he were curled up on the hearthrug, he would just open his lazy eyes and prick up one ear, and contentedly let the tune run its course.

But he had a strange dislike to the 'Old Hundred,' especially if we gave it an extra drawl. When the first two or three notes were struck, he knew it in a moment from any other tune, and began to show his dislike by getting up, and walking uneasily about the room, and looking his displeasure into our faces. Then his tail fell between his legs, his chin began to rise, his mouth gradually opened, and he commenced a low whine

which we could only just hear. As the singing went on, his nose got higher and higher, and his whine grew louder and louder, as if he were really in trouble. By and by the whine fairly became a howl, and his doggieship's nose pointed straight to the ceiling. Last of all, poor excited Dash set up a loud angry bark, and we finished the singing in a hearty laugh at his uncommonly funny antics.

He was, in his tastes, very much like a little dog which belonged to a friend, and had a similar dislike to a certain tune. Sometimes, in order to see if he really knew the tune from any other, his young mistress would play something very lively on the piano; and then, without stopping, she would suddenly change into the tune doggie disliked so much. He caught it in a moment, and immediately set up a howl dismal enough to make all the dogs in the neighbourhood melancholy.

During one of John's visits to Standleys a poor little lamb was left without a mother; so uncle allowed John to have it for his own. It soon got to know him quite well, for he fed it himself with milk, and it would follow him about anywhere, indoors or out. Then, when it grew quite big

and was no longer a lamb, but a real sheep, it was taken to John's own home to be with others, which this same uncle and another had given to John's brothers. You will be glad to know that when his sheep was more than a year old, it had a little lamb of its own.

John had by this time improved in his writing so much that he could without difficulty write to his friends when they were from home. Although the letters were not very long, they were quite long enough to show that he was both thoughtful and loving. Here is a little note to his aunt who was at Dover :

‘MY DEAR AUNT,—We are very pleased to hear you arrived safely. I hope you will enjoy yourselves very much. From JOHN WESLEY D.’

But no matter what took place, all seemed to remind him of something or other which he had read in his Bible. So, when his father and mother went again to Brighton, and told him in their letters of the beautiful sea and the big waves, with the fishing-boats and the fishermen, he turned to his Testament to read about the Sea of Galilee, and Christ and Peter walking on the sea, and the

great storm which Jesus calmed when He said, 'Peace, be still.' So John wrote in his letter: 'After these things Jesus showed Himself again to His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.' He knew, of course, that the Lord Jesus would not show Himself at Brighton, so that his father and mother would really see Him with their eyes. Yet, as He had said, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' he was quite sure that Jesus could and would cause Himself to be felt in their hearts, making them happy and keeping them safe. And this was why father and mother were both so glad to have this short letter from their least little son.

So the weeks passed on, and father and mother were home again. I need not tell you that of all the times when John was glad to have his mother with him, he was especially glad when bed-time came. There was nobody's kiss so sweet as hers, and no one tucked the bed-clothes up so snugly as she.

Besides, there was always that short, kind prayer which seemed to make the bed so soft. Just think of his going to sleep with the smiling mother's face as the last thing upon which the little eyes fell.

He got so accustomed to her bed-time prayer, that sometimes, when it was necessary for some one else to put him to bed who omitted it, there seemed something or other left out, and his eyes were very unwilling to go to sleep. They would seem as if they must keep open till some friend said a short prayer aloud to Jesus, and then the little heart was at rest.

But, generally speaking, John did as I dare say you do. Almost the very minute his tired legs got between the sheets, and his head was laid upon the pillow, he was fast, fast asleep. So that if his mother did a few things about the room after he was in bed, and then came back to the cot, she gave him one more kiss, but he was too soundly asleep to know anything about it.

There is one thing which ought to keep people awake, and it is a very good thing when it does so. I mean, when they have done something which is wrong. But I do not think that John often lay awake on that account. I do not mean to say, you know, that he never did anything that was wrong. But I do know this, that he was very sorry if anything of that sort happened. And he was, besides, very unhappy indeed, until both his

mother and his heavenly Father had forgiven him.

And of course he did not wait long for either the one or the other, because *both* were always ready to forgive a little boy, or a big one either, who was really sorry. You know it is so, do you not?

There was one short verse which John often used to repeat, a verse which has comforted many and many a fearful heart. This was it: 'And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?' (1 Pet. iii. 13.)

I

CHAPTER.V.

HAPPY TIMES.

T must have been about this time, I think, that John first had a real gilt-edged Bible of his own, such an one as he could take to chapel with him. But, for reading at family worship, father bought for him, as he did for all of us, one with very much larger print. Of course it was very pleasant to be able to read out of somebody else's Bible, or even out of his own little Testament. But to



have a Bible all his own! Why, I think he felt richer than if his father had given him a gold sovereign.

But a new Bible is not of much service to anybody who does not use it. And John thought, 'Now that I have this book of my own, I will try to learn more and more of it.' And so every day he learnt some new verse or part of a verse. In that way, you see, he really got to know a great many of the most beautiful verses in the Bible. It was like finding beautiful shells by the seaside, or sweet flowers on sunny banks. Then, as he always had his Bible at family worship, and sometimes read a verse in turn with the others, he kept adding to his little store.

But, all this while, he was getting more and more handy in doing all sorts of kind and useful things. He could even run on errands for his mother to the shop. Sometimes it was the milk he fetched; sometimes the butter or half a score of eggs. But there was nothing he liked better than an errand of kindness to some poor neighbour. Sometimes it would be in the company of his mother or sister; now and again by himself.

For instance, there was old Nanny, who lived

in the cottage quite close to John's home. There sat Nanny with her lace pillow before her, nimbly twisting the bobbins with one hand, as she shifted the pins from hole to hole on the parchment pattern with the other. As John entered, she just raised her head a little, and looked at him over her big, broad-brimmed spectacles. But it was a very kind look ; for she was always glad to see her little neighbour.

Sometimes he would stand silently and watch the old woman, wondering how she managed to twist the bobbins so fast ; and how the beautiful lace grew little by little—just a stitch at a time—until there was quite a long piece. Then she would carefully take off the clean cloth which covered up the piece already done, and, folding back the new piece, replace the protecting cloth, and then begin again her bobbin work.

Now Nanny had, a very short time before this, lost her husband, whose name was Matthew. John knew it was a great sorrow to her ; so he always tried to say something kind that he thought would comfort her. He very often took his Bible with him, and then he would find either his favourite chapter—the fourteenth of St. John

—or the twenty-third Psalm, or something of that sort. Or perhaps it would be about the poor widow who threw two mites into the treasury, and of whom Christ said such kind things. Or of that other widow who lived at Zarephath during the famine, and whose barrel of meal and cruse of oil did not fail, according to the saying of Elijah the man of God, until the famine was over.

Now and again her little visitor would remind Nanny of some texts which his mother had told him about, and had perhaps turned down in his Bible, so that he could easily find them. Such as this: ‘A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation.’ Or this: ‘Let thy widows trust in Me.’ And poor old Nanny used to say, when he got outside her cottage to run home, ‘Bless his little heart! how I do love him!’ So you see, little as he was, he really had the same blessing that good old Job had thousands and thousands of years ago. For he had ‘the blessing of him that was ready to perish,’ and ‘he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.’

I need not tell you that when any kind act of

this sort had been done, he was as light-hearted and as happy as a lark, and a good game at marbles was more enjoyable than ever. He could 'shoot' ever so much better. Or, in the evening, when the lamp was lighted, and he joined his brothers at the game of the 'Map of Europe,' as it was called, he could spin the 'teetotum,' or count out the proper number of counters, and join in a good hearty laugh when somebody had to 'miss turn' or 'pay forfeit' for getting into bad places.

When the game was over, John ran to get his father's slippers. And you know what little 'Merry Andrews' like to do with their father's slippers. They slip their own little shoes into them, and then go slouch-slouching like a Laplander in his snow-shoes. I can almost hear him now come 'whish-whish-whishing' along the passage, and see his roguish pate popped round the door, with, 'I'm coming, father,' as he strode into and waddled all across the sitting-room like 'puss in boots.'

I have told you that he was kind and helpful to those who lived near him; and those who are kind to their neighbours and friends feel and act

kindly too, as far as they can, to those who live a long way off. There was the missionary-box on the mantelpiece; and while he was yet quite a tiny mite, he could pop in pennies and three-penny pieces, long before he understood at all why he did it. And at Christmas, when the Juvenile Collecting Cards came, for the Wesleyan Missionary Society, even before he was able to collect himself, his name was put at the head of a card, and his sister and brothers asked for contributions in his name.

You have read of Hannah and her little son Samuel. Ever so long before he knew anything at all about God and the tabernacle, and who Eli was, his mother had been praying, I cannot say how often and how long, that her boy might grow every day to love all that is good. And very likely, when he went first to stay with Eli, he could not do very much more than fetch Eli's slippers, or snuff the lamps, or put a bit of wood on the altar fire, or sing a Hebrew hymn to the old priest. But although these were little things to do, God was just as pleased with them, if he tried to do them well, as He was when Samuel grew to be a man, and had to be a judge of the

people, or when he took messages from God to King Saul and King David.

And it was something in this way with John and his mother. She taught him, as you are taught, to do little things in a good spirit, and to try to make other people happy. There is no doubt that this is pleasing to God. And collecting money in order to help a little to send to heathen children the good news of Christ's love, must be pleasing to Him too. For Jesus said Himself: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel'—that is, the good news—to every creature.' And if people cannot go themselves, the next best thing they can do is to give or collect money that others may go, and to pray God to be with those who do go. And so our little friend was delighted to have his share in this great work.

I suppose you have found out, long before this, that it is quite possible to read a book, and yet to take very little notice of what you read. And some people seem to find this very easy indeed when they read the Bible. Still, that is not quite as it should be. John certainly did take notice of almost everything he read, and so he remem-

bered a great deal. He sometimes asked a great many questions too, so that he might understand.

One of the texts he had learnt was this (they are the words of Peter, and are in his first letter, chapter iii. verse 18): 'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.' It seems that John knew this verse by heart. It was one of his 'little pillows' or 'morning bells.' And a very nice pillow it made, or a bell for the morning either.

Well, one Sunday the preacher repeated this verse in his sermon; and when John's quick ears caught it, he looked up into his mother's face and whispered, 'Do you hear, mother? That's one of my verses.' It so happened that the preacher, when he got towards the end of the verse, altered one word in it. Instead of saying, 'that He might bring us *to God*,' he said, 'that He might bring us *to Himself*.' This change the little hearer noticed. So when they got home, and he and his mother were sitting alone, they began talking about the service. 'How was it, mother,' said John, 'that the preacher altered the

last word of my text, and said "to Himself" instead of "to God"? Does it mean the same?'

His mother was very glad to see that her little son remembered so well the exact words of the text. She then explained to him that the meaning *is* just the same, whichever word is used, because the Bible tells us over and over again that Christ *is* God. You remember, I dare say, that Jesus Himself said, 'I and My Father are *one*.'

Now John had, without knowing it, come upon the most wonderful thing in the Bible. We are all of us very much puzzled indeed to know *how* it can be. But then we are puzzled about a thousand things which we are yet quite sure of. You are puzzled and I am puzzled *how* that little seed which you put into the ground one day, a few days afterwards burst open, and out came a little green leaf, which soon peeped up out of the earth, and then grew and grew, until to-day it is ever so big, so that the sparrows and robins and chaffinches sit in it. You are very much puzzled how it is that your father sometimes gets a telegram, which has been sent along a wire ever so many miles in a very short time

indeed. You are puzzled; but you know it is so.

Now the question which John asked, and which his mother tried to answer, is perhaps the most puzzling question that a little boy could ask. And it is one of the questions to which we cannot have the answer yet. You will, as you get older, find out a great deal which will make you feel quite sure that Christ is God. But *how* that can be, we shall none of us know until we get where our little friend now is. There we 'shall know even as also we are known.'

There was another thing which used sometimes to puzzle John too, but this he got to understand better. How was it possible that his mother could still love him, even when he was not good? And how is it that God still loves us all, even when we do that which He cannot be pleased with? This was very strange to him.

And so they talked this over together, and mother told him that it was quite true that she loved him dearly even when he was naughty, but that it was then a *love of pity*, but that at other times it was a *love of delight*; and that it is so with God. He always loves us; but

His love sometimes causes Him to pity us, and even to be angry with us. But when we do that which is well-pleasing to Him, He delights in us. It was this love of pity which made Christ weep over Jerusalem, and die for us upon the cross. But it was His love of delight which made Him say of the children, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.' Sometimes, when John had done a thing which was not quite good, he would say to his mother, 'Mother, you love me with a love of pity now, don't you?'

There was a very good old man in the village, named James. He had worked very hard in the fields when he was younger and stronger, and so his back had become bent almost double. Poor old James! Everybody respected him, because he was such a true Christian. And, you know, a Christian is one who tries to be like Christ. Nothing pleased John better than to go to old James's house. Sometimes he would go alone, and sometimes with his mother or sister. And they did not often go empty-handed. It was a very beautiful sight indeed—the old grey-headed disciple and the young disciple sitting side by side and talking together about the things they

loved best. They were both little children in love. And Jesus says that is what we are all to be. We are not to be proud, nor selfish, nor unloving.

Whenever the bent form of his poor old friend passed the window to go down to the chapel—for the old gentleman would go as long as he was at all able—John could not help thinking of the poor infirm woman of whom he had read in the Gospels, who went stooping for eighteen years. And so he would sometimes say, as he watched him pass, ‘Look, mother, here comes poor old James; he is “bowed together,” and can “in no wise lift up” himself.’

After a while the old man came by no more. He became sick and soon died. Now old James had often told John, when his little friend saw how trembling and weak and bowed he was, that when he got home to heaven God would give him a new body. It would be altogether different from, and a great deal more beautiful than, the poor old body which would be put in the grave. And this John thought of directly he heard the poor old man was dead. And when a messenger had to be sent into town to tell the minister, John

asked to be allowed to send a message too. So he said, 'Tell Mr. Sarden that dear old James is dead, and now God will give him a glorious body.'

I need not tell you, for you have already found out, that John was a little Methodist as well as a little Christian. And you know that Methodists are very glad to meet together once every week in what they call 'class meetings.' Here they read the Bible together, and sing, and pray, and talk with one another, and so try to help each other to be better Christians.

John would often go with his mother to these meetings, and was very much disappointed indeed if anything prevented him from going. And it is a very nice place to go to, for anybody who finds pleasure in being good and doing good. Of course, going to chapel, in itself, is neither being good nor doing good. But every time we think about God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, every time we think of His words, and why He has made us, and how Jesus lived to show us how to live, and died on the cross so that we may never die—every time we ask God for Jesus Christ's sake to forgive us the wrong we have done, and to give us strength so that we may do wrong no more—we really get

more and more able to be and do all that God desires in us.

And this was why John was always sorry when he couldn't go with his mother to her class. The singing, too, was so cheerful and pleasant. So that altogether he enjoyed it quite as much, in its way, as he did a good romping game at another time. There are so many things to help us to be happy, if we only look out for them.

Then, when the minister, at the end of each quarter, came to have a little talk with them, and gave each member what is called the 'quarterly ticket,' John looked out for a ticket too. I do not think his name was put down in the book with the others—and yet I do not know why it should not have been—but the minister was very glad to give John a ticket with the rest. And I am sure there was no one who was more wishful to be a Christian than he; and that was what this particular ticket meant: 'The little boy whose name is on this ticket is trying to be a Christian boy.'

Then there was the 'lovefeast.' He was very unwilling to be left out of that. And if it is intended to be a 'feast' for those who have real love to God and to each other, I do not see that

anybody had more right to be there than John. He would not have liked the cake and the water to have missed him, I am sure, any more than he would have liked to have been missed if he had been on the mountain-side when Jesus fed the multitude. For he had learned, in *Peep of Day*:

‘How happy they who shared the bread
Of Jesus here below !
From place to place He travelled,
And they with Him did go.

‘’Tis true I cannot here below
With Thee, my Saviour, dwell ;
To heaven one day I hope to go,
And then to know Thee well.’

You see John was beginning to find out what Jesus meant when He said, ‘I am the Bread of Life.’ His little spirit wanted Jesus just as badly as his body wanted bread. But I am sure he knows a great deal better now than any of us do what the ‘Bread of Life’ means. But while he was still with us, how heartily he used to sing ‘Grace before Meat’ !

‘Be present at our table, Lord ;
Be here and everywhere adored ;
Thy creatures bless, and grant that we
May feast in Paradise with Thee.’

And, in returning thanks :

‘We thank Thee, Lord, for this our food,
But more because of Jesu’s blood ;
Let manna to our souls be given,
The Bread of Life sent down from heaven.’

Another of John’s happy times was when with his sister and brothers, as well as father and mother, all gathered round the fire before going to chapel on Sunday evening, or at some other convenient time, to ‘say verses.’ Sometimes it would be verses of hymns and sometimes of Scripture. They were generally repeated in the order of the alphabet. A all round first, then B all round, and so on. As John was the least, he had the privilege of beginning the round ; then there was no fear that some one else would take the verse he knew. One of his little books was a *Scripture Alphabet* ; and these verses he had learnt, as well as many others, so that it was very seldom indeed that he needed any help. It was a little more difficult when we ‘capped’ verses ; that is, when each one followed with a verse beginning with the same letter as the last word in the text which went before ; because then one did not know ever so long beforehand what letter was coming next.

Hymns were perhaps rather more difficult than texts of Scripture ; but, for such a little boy, he did very well indeed. In fact, I am not so sure that he did not sometimes beat the bigger ones.

I am quite sure of this, that in this way he learnt a great many new verses both in poetry and in God's Word, and they were 'hidden' in his heart as well as in his memory. Just as David said, you know : 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.'

Now and then, if either John or his mother happened to be poorly on Sunday, and had to stay at home, they managed to get a very good service together. There was one at any rate who enjoyed it quite as much as, and perhaps a little more than, if he had been at chapel. You see, he had to be the preacher, and to make his own pulpit too. But he could manage that with a footstool and a chair back.

First they began with a hymn, and of course he would choose one of his favourites. The singing was not quite perfect, I dare say, but it was very hearty. And then mother's prayer would be so nice and simple that he would understand every word of it. The lesson from the Scripture too ;

he could have a few verses, could read them just as slowly as he liked, and stop when he pleased, to ask his mother what this verse and the other meant. The sermon they got through capitally, because he could read from a tiny little book of short sermons, written in very short words, from a very short text, which just suited a very short preacher such as he was.

But he was not a bit less interested in other things. I forget who it was, but some kind friend gave us a rabbit. Such a tame one it was! Not at all like the little grey rabbits we found in the wood. I do not think I have seen another quite like this. He kept himself as clean as pussy does. He might have been at school. In fact, I expect he had been at a bunny school, and, for aught I know, had sung in bunny language :

‘ We’ll go to our places
With clean hands and faces,
And pay great attention to all we are told.’

His black-and-white coat was just delicious to stroke. But I am disposed to think that we fondled him too much. And perhaps we enjoyed the romps on the grass-plot with him under the

'nonesuch' apple tree rather more than he did himself. Still we none of us intended anything but kindness, and John would have been the last to intentionally hurt his pet. I think, however, that the chain we put round Master Rabbit's neck was a wee bit too heavy. And so it came to pass, much to our sorrow, that he died—of too much attention. The fact is, we forgot he was a rabbit, and not a strong boy, such as his companions were.

I have told you that John had a large-print Bible which he used especially at family worship. When all joined in reading the chapter round verse by verse, and John himself was able to take his turn too, it made it ever so pleasant, and he enjoyed it much more than when he only listened. For, having a real share in it, it was so much easier to fix his attention upon it.

He was very much attached to the kind friend who made him his wheelbarrow. Many and many a chat did they have together. Walton had a little niece called Curtis, who lived in Derbyshire. Now Walton had so often spoken of her, that John thought of her as one of his special friends. You may judge, therefore, how sorry they were to hear

that little Curtis had sickened and died. It is of her he speaks in this short letter :

‘MY DEAR WALTON, — I thank you for your kind letter. Curtis was 8 years 10 months 27 days. Mary has done the tracts, and I carried them all out—all but Mark M.’s, and Mary took them when she went to shut your window. Mr. Webb was here yesterday, and his text was : “Do this in remembrance of Me.” From yours affectionately,

‘JOHN WESLEY D.’

I suppose Walton had told him the day Curtis was born and the day she died, and then his sister helped him to find out how old she was.

This little letter shows the sort of things that John was interested in. He was glad to be helpful in anything. He did not mind, you see, whether it was in shutting windows or taking out tracts. It is wonderful what a number of things a pair of very little hands can do, when they happen to belong to a little boy with a good will and a kind heart.

Among his books there is a little one with a blue cover, which has in it ever so many witty and wise

things said by Dr. Franklin, who generally called himself 'Poor Richard.' Much that 'Poor Richard' said is more interesting to a man than a boy. But there are some things which even a boy six years old could understand, and for the rest he could wait. I will tell you a few short sentences, which you will be able both to understand and remember.

Here they are: 'God helps them that help themselves.' 'The sleeping fox catches no poultry.' 'He that riseth late must trot all day.' 'One to-day is worth two to-morrows.' 'The cat in gloves catches no mice.' 'Little strokes fell great oaks.' 'A small leak will sink a great ship.' All of which are very good things to remember; and if you don't quite understand what any of them mean, well, then, ask the first friend you meet.

But I began talking about this little book for another reason. The last page of all contains John's Temperance pledge. At the time that he took the pledge there were hardly any 'Bands of Hope,' as we call them, such as the one to which I suppose you belong. Perhaps you will think John's pledge very curious. I think it was a very good one indeed. Here it is:

‘THE CHILDREN’S PLEDGE.


‘ This little band
Do with our hand
The pledge now sign,
To drink no wine ;
Nor brandy red,
To turn our head ;
Nor crazy gin,
To tempt to sin ;
Nor whisky hot,
That makes the sot ;
Nor filthy beer,
That makes us queer ;
Nor fiery rum,
To turn our home
Into a cell
Where none could dwell,
Whence peace would fly,
Where hope would die,
And love expire
’Mid such a fire.
So here WE PLEDGE *perpetual hate*
To all that can inioxicate.

‘ *Name*—JOHN WESLEY D.

‘ *Date*—October 4, 1852.’

CHAPTER VI.

A SHORT PILGRIMAGE.

E had the good fortune to have given us a pair of the nattiest pigeons you ever saw. The plumage of their bodies was as white as snow, while their heads and tails were raven black. What charming birds they were! I do not know that God ever made a pair of pigeons more beautiful. Anyway, John and his brothers thought there were no pigeons like them anywhere.

What bright black beads of eyes peered out of their dainty black heads! And how gracefully and genteelly they walked about, picking up the corn thrown to them! How many moments of pleasure John had in watching the movements of the bonnie gentle pair! How the glossy raven feathers glistened in the sun, as they marched hither and thither! How he watched the beautiful creatures careering through the air on their light wings far, far away, until they looked like white butterflies,

and were almost lost to sight ! Then to see them come sweeping back again to the dove-cote, as much as to say, ' Ah, little friend, did you think we were going quite away ? Never fear ; we like our home too well. But don't you wish you had wings like us, and then you could go speeding away towards the sun whenever you like ? '

And very likely John thought it would be very nice indeed. But even pigeons' wings get tired, and they can after all soar only a very little way.

But the little boy who watched them with such delight could soar where they could not. He could go in thought to the sun and to the stars, and ever so far beyond that, to the place where God and the angels are. And of all this the pigeons knew nothing, and could understand nothing. So, after all, it was better to be a little boy than a pigeon.

Besides, some day, when God should see fit, that same little boy should not only go in thought, as he did then, but go really—he himself—soaring away, unseen, to heaven itself. Why, the very thought of it is delightful. But it was not to be so for a little while yet, although it was every day getting nearer and nearer.

And so the happy days and weeks went by. John returned to Whitehouse to school for a little time, but in a few days he had to come home again. How often things turn out very differently from what we hope and expect !

John had been poorly some days, but we all hoped that he would soon be quite himself again. For a little time he was still able to go to the door when Mr. Mitburn brought his nice sweet crusty loaves. And on Saturday afternoon he was ready as usual for Mr. Rollis's regular visit with the weekly supply of tea. He was still interested in the sparrows and robins, and anticipating when the snow should be upon the ground, and he would give them an extra supply of crumbs.

But yet, somehow or other, he didn't run about as briskly as usual. His little legs so soon got tired. And at dinner-time the plate took a very, very long time indeed before it was empty. Mother's simple medicines did not seem to do him any good ; and so at last father said, ' I think we must send for Dr. Ceelby.'

When he came, he told mother she had better keep her little boy in bed for a day or two, and then he hoped he would be right again. But a

day or two passed, and the poor little fellow was worse instead of better. And we were all disappointed. Everybody went very quietly about the house, and we all asked God many times in the day, if it were His will, to let dear John get better.

Some little scraps of letters which his sister and brother sent almost every day to aunt, who was as anxious as any of us about her little pet, will show how our hope, little by little, died out.

'December 8th, Wednesday.—John is no worse, but we still keep giving nourishment every hour. He is still insensible.'

'12th, Sunday.—John remains about the same. He would not know you if you came. Unless there is an alteration, he cannot live. We still have hope sometimes. The fever shows itself more than it has done before. He had a little sleep last night.'

'14th, Tuesday evening.—Dear little Wesley continues sometimes better and sometimes worse. He is so weak that the doctor said to-day he might die at any moment. We yet hope he might rally again, if he could take sufficient support; and yet

we have nothing to build our hopes upon. You would be astonished if you saw how weak he is. The rest of us are very tired, but we do not mind that, if we have health and strength to attend to our duties.'

'15th, *Wednesday evening*.—J. W. lies just about the same. We do not know what to say. . . . We shall try and do the beef extract: there is a little at the fire now.'

'16th, *Thursday evening*.—We hope J. W. is no worse. He requires constant attention. Mr. Ceelby says, if he had not had every attention, he could not have lived so long. Mother thinks you will be pleased to hear that we have a good nurse: she thinks nothing too much that she can do for the dear little fellow. She is so very kind and attentive.'

'17th, *Friday*.—Dear little Wesley lies just about the same. We know not what to say. Sometimes he revives a little, and then we have hope. At another time he seems sinking, as though he must soon be gone. . . . John said, when he came home, that if he were better he was to go back to the breaking up; but, poor little dear, he is on a sick-bed.'

You see that the little invalid had all the help that kind friends and a kind doctor could give him ; all of us hoping that by and by he would get strong again, and once more romp and play as he used to do. But our heavenly Father had other and better pleasures awaiting him. But this we did not know then.

Sometimes, as the letters tell, his poor little brain could not think at all, and he did not know anybody or anything. Then again he knew every one, and could talk just a little.

He had, as you hear, a very kind nurse, but she had not then learned to love the Lord Jesus Christ. One day, after she had been lying on the bed by the side of John, and was just going to get up, he said to her, 'Nurse, how long will it take you to dress and say your prayers?' Now nurse had not been accustomed to say her prayers at all for ever so long ; which was very sad, you know. And when the little sick boy asked her that very simple question, she remembered in a moment how forgetful she had been of the good God who had loved her so much. If you had been in the room, you would have seen her put up her apron to wipe away some tears that would come running down

her cheeks. And then she thought and thought, and came again to Jesus whom she had forgotten.

During the last days that John was with us, he was very, very weak indeed, and was only now and then able to speak at all.

One evening, when father was sitting by his bed, he repeated the Lord's Prayer very gently to him, for he was so weak that he could not say it himself. As soon as it was finished, John muttered half unconsciously, 'A-men — a-men — a-men — a-men ;' as if he had hold of his Father's hand in heaven, just as he had of the kind father who sat by his side.

His little tired body seemed always to want rest, and the short prayer that seemed to suit him best was :

'Let me lean upon Thy breast :
Lull me, lull me, Lord, to rest.'

Many and many a time had he gone to sleep with those very sweet words on his lips. But never did they seem so sweet or so suitable as now. His little spirit was soon going to be carried by the angels to the bosom of Jesus—to Jesus, of whom he had read so often and so gladly.

Oh, how thankful we all were to think of his

favourite fourteenth chapter of St. John now, and that Jesus had really said, 'I go to prepare a place for you'! Yes, for this His own little disciple, who was now quite ready to go. For had not Jesus come again, as He had promised He would, to take him to Himself?

Was it not a happy sleeping, think you, on Monday, the 20th of December 1852?

We could not but be happy through our tears. For we can go to him, although he cannot return to us.

In the Land of Beauty, where he is no more tired, and where the inhabitants never say, 'I am sick,' his spirit, which Jesus came to ransom, as He did yours and mine, is happy—Oh, how happy!—in doing the errands of mercy which Jesus finds for His little angels to do.

'JESU'S LITTLE SOLDIER.

'I am a little soldier,
And only five years old ;
I mean to fight for Jesus,
And wear a crown of gold.
I know He makes me happy,
And loves me all the day ;
I'll be His little soldier—
The Bible says I may.

A Little Disciple.

'I love my precious Saviour,
Because He died for me ;
And if I did not serve Him,
How sinful I should be !
He gives me every comfort,
And hears me when I pray ;
I want to live for Jesus—
The Bible says I may.

' I now can do but little,
Yet when I grow a man,
I try and do for Jesus
The greatest good I can.
God help and keep me faithful
In all I do and say ;
I want to live a Christian—
The Bible says I may.'

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